

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 001721

SIPDIS

NEA/ARPI FOR STHORNE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/12/2010

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: QATAR: CODEL REED'S 10 OCTOBER 2005 MEETING WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL-THANI.

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer for reasons 1.4 (A) and (B)

1. (C) Senators Jack Reed of Rhode Island and Chris Dodd of Connecticut met with Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani (HBJ) in his private majlis at Al-Wajba Palace outside Doha on the evening of 10 October 2005. Senator Dodd is the third-ranking Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, and Senator Reed is the fifth-ranking Democrat on the Armed Services Committee. Ambassador Untermeyer also attended.

US-Qatar Military Ties

2. (C) Senator Dodd began by speaking of the Al Udeid Air Base as "a tremendous asset" and telling HBJ, "The support of Qatar is deeply, deeply appreciated." Senator Reed concurred. HBJ thanked the senators and said, "Militarily things are going very well. We have an issue in that I want to move (CENTCOM Forward) Headquarters from As Saliyah to Al Udeid. I warned the military before and after the Iraq war that As Saliyah is near an industrial area. We spent a lot of time searching there for a rocket. (Comment: HBJ was referring to an RPG fired onto the Qatari side of Camp As Saliyah in March 2004 by unknown person(s).) It is an industrial area with a lot of trucks and lots of garbage. As the ambassador knows, I don't like that property. We will participate financially in moving the headquarters to Al Udeid. It is better for security. We bought all the farms around it."

Iran and Iraq

3. (C) Senator Dodd said he and his colleague would be traveling to Iraq the next day and sought HBJ's thoughts on the conflict there. HBJ said, 'We had an American delegation (headed by Amb. James Jeffrey) a few days ago (6 Oct). I told them I would not talk about the mistakes (made by the US). If you succeed in Iraq, we succeed in Qatar, because we were the first to support the US. The constitution might pass, fine. But I am worried about the unity of Iraq. There are problems with a federal state. There are two kinds of Shia: Arab and Persian. The Kurds are a special category."

4. (C) "The Foreign Minister of Iran was here (also 6 Oct) to discuss this issue. There is interference (in Iraq) from Iran. My fear is that the Persian is more clever than us. They always try to sneak around in a quiet way. The war in Iraq is in their favor. And if you are looking for a nuclear bomb, they will sneak around, with a little negotiation here and a little negotiation there, till one day they have it. Now we have to think about how to make a balance in Iraq. If you don't have this balance, the Iranians will have their hands on most of the oil. Bahrain is majority Shia. In Kuwait, there is a big percentage of Shia. The population in the oilfields of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia is Shia. The Iranians want to dominate the Persian Gulf, and they are willing to wait many years. That's why I say they are clever: They are patient.

5. (C) "My fear is if the Sunnis are not on board with this (constitution), then we'll have a civil war. A lot of money will pour into Iraq (from terrorist sources), and we'll have Al Qaida there and in Afghanistan. I don't care if they are Sunnis. What I care about is the stability of the region. That won't happen while Iran has the upper hand. You also have to use the Arab Shia in Iraq. They are a very important element. They won't go with Iran completely."

6. (C) Senator Dodd asked HBJ if the general impression in the region is that the US favors the Shia. HBJ said yes; that is certainly the view being propounded by Zarqawi and Al Qaida. "It is a problem. I am sure that is not your strategy. The Shia have a majority. Your people have dialogued more with the Shia, thinking of them as Iraqis, not as Shia."

7. (C) Senator Dodd asked what HBJ thinks of the proposed Iraqi constitution. He replied: "How you spread the wealth is important. You have to give more seats to the Sunnis in parliament. It is very important that Iraq be part of the Arab nations. If it is with Iran, Turkey, Israel, and Russia,

it will get lost." When Senator Dodd expressed surprise that Iraq would not naturally be part of the Arab League, HBJ said that the Kurdish and Shia elements would not care if Iraq has a larger Arab identity.

Elections

18. (C) Senator Reed asked HBJ when Qatar might hold parliamentary elections. HBJ replied that these must wait till electoral district lines are drawn, made difficult by having many tribes. A special committee under the Ministry of the Interior has been working on the map and was supposed to have finished in June of this year. They asked to have another eight months to finish, which would be about now. But he expects them to conclude their work in February 2006. Once the lines are drawn and published, "we will have to start doing the paperwork" of an election. And because this would be a first for Qatar, it will have to be done carefully. Senator Reed said, "We have problems with our elections." (Comment: Qatar has held municipal elections in Doha twice, in 1999 and 2003, and Doha contains two-thirds of the nation,s population.)

19. (C) HBJ said, "I hope we have elections by the end of next year -- hopefully. Some are saying February 2007." When Ambassador asked whether Qatar would attempt to hold first-ever parliamentary elections at roughly the same time as the 2006 Asian Games, HBJ replied (as if never having considered the matter), "That is a problem. Maybe February 2007 is better."

Al Jazeera

110. (C) Senator Dodd said, "I know you,d be disappointed if I didn,t raise the subject of Al Jazeera." HBJ said, "We are working with the Ambassador on this issue. We are a peaceful, small country; we have no intention of harming anyone. We are the main target for these people (terrorists). They fear Al Jazeera. We are working with the Ambassador to fix Al Jazeera without demolishing what we are trying to do with a free press. There definitely are mistakes with Al Jazeera, but we have the full intention of finding a solution to these problems." Senator Dodd said that more American policymakers should appear on Al Jazeera. HBJ said, "That is a good idea. You are welcome to appear."

Future Contact

111. (C) HBJ closed the 45-minute-long discussion by inviting the senators to return for the annual Democracy & Free Trade conference in Doha in early 2006. Senator Dodd counter-invited HBJ and the Amir to meet with the Foreign Relations Committee whenever they are in Washington. HBJ suggested that the senators join the Qatar Congressional Caucus, and they expressed strong interest in doing so.
UNTERMEYER